

Hon. Anne Cools: Honourable senators, Senator MacDonald had moved the adjournment. He indicated to me that he would yield to me, but he is not here at this time.

Hon. C. William Doody (Deputy Leader of the Government): There is no problem with that, Senator Cools. The order can still stand in his name. Please go ahead.

● (1630)

Senator Cools: Honourable senators, I hope that I can match a little of the interest and the fervour that has just been experienced by most of us. I think some of us need a few minutes to settle down. In any event, it is my understanding that the Senate has just defeated Bill C-43, so perhaps I can be the first to call attention to that fact.

The immediate order of business before us is the motion of censure of Senator Charbonneau. As we all know, Senator Charbonneau has, in the minds of many on our side, acted quite inappropriately. The wording of the motion calls upon Senator Charbonneau, essentially, to resign. In actual fact, the motion articulates the wish that the Prime Minister be advised that Senator Charbonneau should not be in the position of Speaker of the Senate.

I should like to say, honourable senators, that for the past many weeks we have all observed Senator Charbonneau smarting under his own mischief. We have all been aware for quite a few years that Senator Charbonneau was not in his strongest field of endeavour as Speaker of the Senate, but many of us overlooked it, or forgave it, because many of us—or at least I did—felt that Senator Charbonneau was a very fine gentleman.

Honourable senators, I should like to share with you a story which indicates the opinion that I had formed of Senator Charbonneau—until the GST debate. Some years ago, soon after I came to the Senate, a woman came to visit me with her daughter. I proceeded to show this friend of mine and her daughter the Senate. In the process of doing so, this woman said to her daughter, “Your grandfather walked through these halls. Your grandfather worked in these halls.” Of course, I automatically inquired of these persons as to who the grandfather, or perhaps it was the great-grandfather, was. I was told that the notable person was C.D. Howe. Having acquired this information, I was, of course, seized with some excitement and some fervour and proceeded to acquire a great more zeal in showing the descendants of this most remarkable Canadian around the Senate.

Honourable senators, I charged into the Speaker’s chambers, very excited that this child was visiting, and I wanted to introduce her to some of the senators. I want to let honourable senators know that Senator Charbonneau responded with tremendous grace and magnanimity. He was very pleasant and very nice. That, for me, was my formative impression of Senator Charbonneau: a very nice man, not too up on the rules and procedures, but fundamentally a nice man. At least, honourable senators, so I thought.

[The Hon. the Speaker.]

Honourable senators, it is with some considerable disappointment that I feel I must join with those who consider that a motion of censure should be passed on him.

I should like to refer very briefly to the famous, or rather infamous, letter of December 10, 1990, whereby I believe 54 honourable senators from the other side sent to Speaker Charbonneau. Clearly, it is not a letter, because if one examines it one sees very clearly that there is not a single signature on the letter. As a matter of fact, if one probes a little deeper one discovers that, in point of fact, there is a list of signatures somehow or other stapled to this letter, but the letter, in and of itself, is not signed. There is nothing whatever to relate the list of signatures to the letter. I find that very interesting because I was under the impression that we, as parliamentarians, having before us a particular forum, used particular instruments, and the instruments that we used were parliamentary instruments, such as motions and inquiries and resolutions. They are part and parcel of our parliamentary tradition. The letter is, to my mind, quite a new phenomenon.

What I am about to say may be a little novel to some honourable senators, but my opinion is that, in point of fact, that communication was not a letter to Speaker Charbonneau at all. It was, rather, a very thinly-veiled petition. It was a petition to the Speaker. However, the Speaker, within our system, has no authority whatsoever to receive a petition from members of the Senate. Senator Charbonneau, in receiving this letter, and in acting according to its instructions, has done a most interesting thing. He has usurped the Throne. It is the Governor General of Canada who is authorized to receive petitions or expressions of wishes from honourable senators. It is very interesting because, while I know that this government currently is seized of repudiating many of the principles of responsible government, it is my understanding that the Speaker of the Senate has no authority whatsoever to receive petitions from honourable senators.

Honourable senators, I would just like to—

Senator Simard: Conclude?

Senator Cools: No, no, Senator Simard. You are like a mosquito. I should like to tell you, Senator Simard, there are in the West Indies and in tropical climates things called mosquito nets. These mosquito nets are fine, gossamer-like, almost invisible, but they have the effect of keeping mosquitos at bay. Frequently, Senator Simard, you remind me of a mosquito around a mosquito net.

Senator Simard: Come back to Canada!

Senator Cools: Don’t worry about that! I am here and I am not leaving.

Honourable senators, I should like to be very clear because this current government has demonstrated on many occasions that it has no compunction about intruding into authority and the powers of the Governor General and the two Speakers. This government has no regard for any opinion other than the opinion of one man, that man being the Prime Minister.

On the question of the motion, of course, I would like to place on the record a couple of thoughts. First, those of us on